

£800 GAMING PCs

INTRODUCTION

Despite the popularity of games consoles, the PC is still the most played, most varied and most powerful gaming platform around. There's a huge range of software available, from the latest adrenalin-inducing first-person shooters to life-consuming online role-playing games and historical strategy games of awesome accuracy.

What's more, a gaming PC can do so much more than play games. When you're not destroying aliens or re-creating epic tank battles, a gaming PC's powerful processor and big LCD monitor are ideal for browsing the internet, watching DVDs or working on your home movie masterpiece.

A powerful gaming PC needn't be expensive, either. This month we've gathered together nine powerful systems that cost just £800 including VAT and delivery. Most can charge through the latest games, and with large displays, multi-core processors and plenty of memory they're ready to take on any other tasks, too. We'll help you pick the perfect powerful PC.

Seth Barton

Notebooks and video expert

seth@computershopper.co.uk



FIRING SQUAD

A gaming PC can do all the usual PC tasks, but it's built for raw, nerve-battering 3D power. We go looking for excitement from nine gaming PCs

Choosing an... £800 Gaming PC

A gaming PC is more than just a normal computer with a powerful graphics card fitted inside. To get the best from games, the monitor, speakers, keyboard and mouse must be carefully chosen, along with many internal components. We'll explain what to look for when picking a gaming PC, and what to avoid.

IN THE FRAMES

A fast graphics card is essential for playing games. A gaming PC needs to be able to run the latest titles at the highest detail settings, at high enough frame rates to make the action look smooth. Most of the PCs in this group performed impressively in our demanding 3D tests, but PC Nextday's Zoostorm and Evesham's Solar MXGT performed poorly.

In addition to our normal tests we ran our Call of Duty 2 benchmark on each PC at the supplied monitor's native resolution, as this gives the best possible image quality. Where these results differed significantly from our standard test, we've noted it in the review.

A good gaming PC will keep you playing for some years, but to keep on top of the latest and greatest games you'll need to upgrade at some point in the future. Many of the PCs here are capable of using a second Nvidia graphics card through the SLI system, but

bear in mind that you may need a more powerful power supply for two graphics cards.

WINDOWS WORK

All the PCs in this group have a multi-core processor, allowing them to cope with the tough processing demands of modern games. With the exception of Evesham's PC they all have an impressive 2GB of memory, too. Having a powerful processor and plenty of memory means they're very powerful in Windows applications, so your gaming PC will also be able to take on tough tasks such as video encoding. Our application benchmarks show which of the PCs on test are most suited to this kind of work, and which are slightly slower.

With widescreen monitors included, gaming PCs are also ideal for watching media files or DVDs. A big hard disk is essential if you want to create a library of media files, and every PC here includes at least 320GB of hard disk space. Five use huge 500GB hard disks, giving you loads of storage space for games, movies and music.

SCREEN PLAY

A good monitor is important for any PC, and widescreen models are particularly suited to gaming.





This month

CCL
DUO-6600-GMX
Page 72



CUBE 247
Electra ST9
Page 72



CYBERPOWER Gamer
Infinity GTS Family
Page 72



ECLIPSE Matrix
Quad Sli i66n88s
Page 73



EVESHAM
Solar MXGT
Page 73



GLADIATOR Centurion
CS2900XT PC
Page 73



MESH
Elite Prestige CSX
Page 74



PC NEXTDAY Zoostorm
5-5403 Edge PC
Page 74



RL SUPPLIES
Modula 4400 OC
Page 74



The monitors supplied with the PCs in this group fall into two main categories. Four have 19in displays with a native resolution of 1,440x900 pixels. The others have larger screens with resolutions of 1,680x1,050. These can display more detail, making games more lifelike and giving you more room to work on large digital photos and spreadsheets.

As well as running our standard monitor tests, we tested each monitor using Call of Duty 2 and Prey. All performed acceptably well, but some are better than others. Our reviews tell you which are particularly good, and which are not as impressive.

GRAND THEFT AUDIO

Whether it's a great musical score or simply the sound of gunfire, sound plays an essential part in any game. Surprisingly, not all the PCs here come with a set of speakers. Some instead rely on the speakers built into their monitors, none of which is up to the task. The PCs with dedicated speakers include either 2.1 or 5.1 sets, so they all include a subwoofer to make the most of big explosions.

It's worth noting that many gamers think a good set of stereo headphones is the best choice for gaming. These give precise directional sound and can keep you immersed in the game without disturbing others nearby. You can buy a decent pair with a microphone for around £20.

KEY ISSUES

A standard keyboard and mouse are sufficient for playing most popular PC games. Although wireless sets are popular, a wired keyboard and mouse has less delay between you pushing a key and your character responding, making them better for gaming.

Most of the PCs here are supplied with Windows Vista Home Premium, but two come with Windows XP. This operating system is more stable when running older games, and its

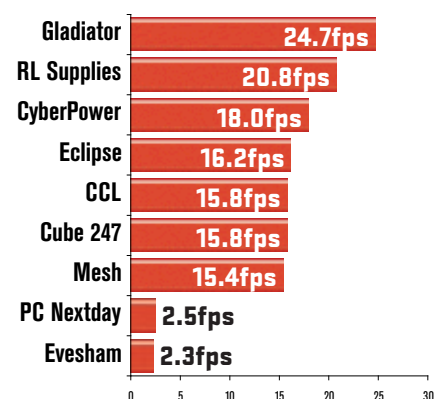
graphics drivers are more refined, so you get slightly better 3D performance. On the other hand, Windows XP won't be able to run the next generation of DirectX 10 games.

If you have many older games that you plan to play on your PC, Windows XP is a better option, but if you plan on playing recent releases, we'd recommend Windows Vista. Fortunately both the PCs that use XP are also available with Windows Vista if you prefer – our reviews explain the upgrade options available.

Testing the future DirectX 10 graphics

DirectX is a system used for developing games that run on Windows PCs. The latest version, DirectX 10 (DX10), runs on Windows Vista and doesn't support Windows XP. All the PCs in our group test have graphics cards that are compatible with the new system, but so far no games have been released that run only on DirectX 10.

To get an idea of possible performance in future DirectX 10 games, we tested each PC with a DirectX 10 demo of Call of Juarez. We ran the test at a resolution of 1,280x1,024 pixels, with details set to high and 4xAA activated. These scores should improve over time as more refined drivers appear for Vista.





CCL DUO-6600-GMX

★★★★

£799 inc VAT and delivery

CCL's DUO has the best pair of input devices in the group, with a gaming keyboard and mouse included as standard.

FEATURES

The Saitek Eclipse keyboard glows blue so you can see the keys in the dark, and it has an adjustable wrist rest. The mouse is Logitech's excellent G5 Laser Mouse. This has adjustable resolution settings to track your hand motions more accurately, and you can add or remove weights to tailor its weight to your taste.

The Duo's Coolermaster case looks bland but is well built. The motherboard doesn't support SLI, so you won't be able to add a second graphics card. A large 500GB hard disk is fitted. Windows XP Media Center Edition is installed as standard, but Windows Vista Home Premium is an option for £10 more. This is one of the quieter PCs here, and shouldn't spoil any tense silent moments in games. No speakers are provided, though, so you're limited to the tinny ones built into the display.

The 19in Asus VW192S monitor has a native resolution of 1,440x900 pixels. It's a widescreen display, which makes it ideal for playing the latest games and watching movies. Its viewing angles are fairly good, so you could watch with a friend. It's a decent display for gaming, but can't compete with the 22in models with other systems.

PERFORMANCE

Like most of the PCs in the group the DUO uses an Nvidia GeForce 8800 GTS graphics card. The results were impressive, and it ran our Call of Duty 2 test at 55.9fps. It scored 199 overall in our application benchmarks. This is one of the lower scores in the group, but it's still more than fast enough for tasks such as video editing.

VERDICT

The Duo comes with excellent input devices, but with no speakers, a 19in monitor and no SLI support it doesn't stand out as good value.

SUMMARY

- ✓ Big hard disk
- ✓ Great input devices
- ✗ No speaker set; 19in display

DESKTOP PC Intel Core 2 Duo E6600, 2GB RAM, 500GB hard disk, 320MB XFX GeForce 8800 GTS (PV-T80G-GHF4), DVD+/-RW +/-DL, 19in widescreen LCD
PART CODE DUO-6600-GMX
SUPPLIER CCL 01274 471201
DETAILS www.cclonline.com



CUBE 247 Electra ST9

★★★★★

£800 inc VAT and delivery

The Electra has a built-in TV tuner, so you can watch and record TV when you're not gaming.

FEATURES

The Electra's case has two optical drives, so you won't have to change discs so often when playing different games. It has an amazing number of ports, with 12 USB2 ports plus FireWire and eSATA. It has an eight-channel analogue audio output and both optical and coaxial S/PDIF digital audio outputs.

A set of Creative 5.1 speakers is supplied. These have plenty of bass, but the subwoofer doesn't blend well with the satellites. Though not perfect, they sound a lot better than the cheaper S200 and S500 Logitech speakers. Apart from the speakers, this PC is incredibly quiet compared with the rest of the group.

The 19in widescreen monitor has decent viewing angles and reproduced detail well, even in dark areas. The PCI Digital TV tuner works with Windows Media Center, which is included with Windows Vista Home Premium. This means you get an excellent interface and a free two-week electronic programme guide. The big 500GB hard disk gives plenty of room for recording programmes. The supplied keyboard and mouse are disappointing, however. The keyboard has a very small Shift key, which is annoying in first-person shooter (FPS) games, and most gamers prefer wired models.

PERFORMANCE

The Electra's Nvidia GeForce 8800 GTS graphics card performed very respectably, producing smooth frame rates in our tests. It came in the middle of our group, producing 49.8fps in CoD2. Its score of 198 in our application benchmarks is one of the lowest, but it's only slightly slower than most PCs here.

VERDICT

As an all-round entertainment PC the Electra is excellent. With a poor keyboard and mouse and unremarkable frame rates in games, though, it's not the best gaming PC.

SUMMARY

- ✓ Digital TV tuner; very quiet
- ✓ Big hard disk
- ✗ Poor keyboard and mouse; 19in display

DESKTOP PC Intel Core 2 Duo E6600, 2GB RAM, 500GB hard disk, 320MB Asus EN8800GTS/HTDP/320M, DVD+/-RW +/-DL, DVD-ROM, 19in widescreen LCD
PART CODE Electra ST9
SUPPLIER Cube247 0870 2421179
DETAILS www.cube247.co.uk



CYBERPOWER Gamer Infinity GTS Family

★★★★★

£799 inc VAT and delivery

CyberPower's PC certainly looks the part, with a chassis designed to appeal to gamers.

FEATURES

The side of the case has a large plastic window that reveals several illuminated fans. On the front is a big metal door, which looks stylish but makes it awkward to reach the power button and optical drive. The motherboard has two PCI Express x16 slots, so you can add a second SLI graphics card later. It's not the quietest PC here, but the big fans don't make any annoying high-pitched noises.

The monitor is a 22in model with a native resolution of 1,680x1,050 pixels. The larger screen gives you a more immersive experience when gaming and makes the most of the powerful graphics card to give you more onscreen detail. The screen has decent viewing angles, and is capable of a bright, clean white. You'll need to adjust it to get the best from it, though, and even then its contrast isn't great, so you lose detail in dark areas.

The wired mouse and keyboard are basic, but CyberPower also includes a set of Logitech 2.1 speakers and a three-year warranty.

PERFORMANCE

CyberPower has overclocked the Intel Core 2 Duo E6600 processor in this PC from 2.4GHz to 2.7GHz. The large fan keeps it running stably, though, and its score of 217 in our application benchmarks is one of the best here.

The EVGA Nvidia GeForce 8800 GTS card used here runs faster than many similar cards in the group. It came second in our Call of Duty 2 benchmark with a speedy 58.7fps. Even at the display's native resolution it ran at a smooth 46.5fps.

VERDICT

The Gamer Infinity is fast in Windows and games, and comes with a big monitor. It's a great gaming computer.

SUMMARY

- ✓ Fast in 3D and applications
- ✓ Three-year warranty; SLI capable
- ✗ Monitor could use more contrast

DESKTOP PC Intel Core 2 Duo E6600, 2GB RAM, 400GB hard disk, 320MB EVGA e-GeForce 8800 GTS (320-P2-811), DVD+/-RW +/-DL, 22in widescreen LCD
PART CODE Gamer Infinity GTS Family
SUPPLIER CyberPower Systems 0800 6120279
DETAILS www.cyberpowersystem.co.uk



ECLIPSE Matrix Quad SLI i66n88s

★★★★★

£800 inc VAT and delivery

The Matrix is by far the cheapest PC we've ever seen that uses an Intel quad-core processor.

FEATURES

The Matrix's case is nothing to get excited about, although the 500GB hard disk inside is particularly roomy. The motherboard supports SLI, so you could add a second graphics card later. There's an eight-channel analogue audio output, but no digital S/PDIF connection. This is one of only three PCs in the group with surround-sound speakers. The Logitech S500 set included here sounds a little muddy, but its rear speakers help to produce an immersive effect that draws you into the game.

Eclipse has included the same 19in Asus monitor as CCL. It's a good display, but it looks small and has a lower resolution than the 22in models included with many PCs here. The keyboard and mouse are poor, too, and are identical to those supplied by Cube 247.

PERFORMANCE

The Intel Core 2 Quad Q6600 has four processing cores, so is amazingly fast in applications that are optimised for multi-core processors. You can see this in our video benchmark, where it scored a staggering 436, and its overall score in our application benchmarks is the best in the group.

In games, though, this quad-core processor isn't a significant advantage. The Matrix also uses an Nvidia GeForce 8800 GTS graphics card that runs at a slightly higher clock speed than most similar models. It scored a quick 52.2fps in our Call of Duty 2 test, just ahead of the Mesh, Gladiator and Cube 247 PCs.

VERDICT

With a staggeringly quick processor that tears through video encoding, this is a good PC for tough tasks in Windows. It's not particularly good for gaming, though, as its keyboard, mouse and small monitor are disappointing.

SUMMARY

- ✓ Very fast in applications
- ✓ SLI capable; big hard disk
- ✗ 19in display; poor keyboard and mouse

DESKTOP PC Intel Core 2 Quad Q6600, 2GB RAM, 500GB hard disk, 320MB XFX GeForce 8800 GTS Extreme (PV-T80G-GHE9), DVD+/-RW +/-DL, 19in widescreen LCD
PART CODE Matrix Quad SLI i66n88s
SUPPLIER Eclipse 08707 456000
DETAILS www.eclipse-computers.com



EVESHAM Solar MXGT

★★★

£800 inc VAT and delivery

Evesham's Solar has a great monitor, but it's slower than most of the systems here.

FEATURES

The Solar's ViewSonic monitor is the only 20in model in the group. It's not much larger than a 19in monitor, but it matches the 1,680x1,050-pixel resolution of the 22in models that come with several PCs here. Its image quality is good, and it produces a clean white across the screen. Games appeared crisp, with vibrant colours and good contrast. Its viewing angles are wide, too, so you can watch movies with a friend.

The speakers look great, but their sound quality can't compare with that of the Logitech X-230 set provided with the RL Supplies PC. Bass was uneven and the satellites sounded congested, giving no sense of space. Like many others here, Evesham has opted for a wireless keyboard and mouse. While convenient for many uses, gamers tend to prefer wired sets.

Evesham has provided a lengthy three-year warranty with this PC. The first two years of service include onsite cover, so you won't be without your PC while the problem is rectified.

PERFORMANCE

The Solar's Nvidia GeForce 8600GT graphics card is far slower than the 8800 GTS cards used by most PCs in this group. It managed a playable 29.4fps in our Prey test, but produced just 19fps in Call of Duty 2. Running the same game at the monitor's native resolution resulted in a poor score of just 15fps.

The Intel Core 2 Duo E6300 processor used in this PC is the slowest processor in the group, running at only 1.86GHz, and Evesham has fitted half as much memory as the other manufacturers. It proved the slowest computer in our application benchmarks.

VERDICT

The Evesham Solar has an excellent monitor and a good warranty, but it's easily the slowest PC here in Windows as well as 3D games. It's not a good gaming PC.

SUMMARY

- ✓ Good monitor; three-year warranty
- ✗ Slow in 3D and Windows; little memory
- ✗ Wireless keyboard and mouse

DESKTOP PC Intel Core 2 Duo E6300, 1GB RAM, 320GB hard disk, 256MB Leadtek Winfast PX8600 GT TDH, DVD+/-RW +/-DL, 20in widescreen LCD
PART CODE Solar MXGT
SUPPLIER Evesham 08701 609500
DETAILS www.evesham.com



GLADIATOR Centurion CS2900XT PC Package

★★★★

£799 inc VAT and delivery

Gladiator takes a different approach from most by using ATI graphics and an AMD processor.

FEATURES

The outside of the Centurion is unremarkable, although its Antec case is smart. A big 600W power supply is fitted, but the motherboard doesn't support CrossFire, so you can't add a second graphics card. A large 500GB hard disk is supplied, so you shouldn't run out of storage space for a while. This is a noisy PC, with the graphics card and power supply creating a droning noise that's louder than most.

The 19in Asus monitor is identical to the CCL PC's. It's not a bad widescreen monitor, but a 22in model can make a lot of difference. Disappointingly, no speakers are provided, and the motherboard has no digital audio output. The keyboard and mouse have been well chosen, though, and both are suited to gaming.

PERFORMANCE

This PC uses the new ATI Radeon HD 2900XT graphics card. Performance was average in our Call of Duty 2 test at 49.7fps, but its score of 75.8fps in Prey is the second best in the group. Its newer architecture also helped in our DirectX 10 test. The card has a built-in audio controller to output audio over HDMI to an HD TV, and it captures analogue video, too.

The Centurion's AMD Athlon 64 X2 5000+ processor runs at 2.6GHz, but it couldn't keep up with most of the Intel Core 2 Duo-equipped PCs. Its overall score of 172 in our application benchmarks was better than only the Evesham.

VERDICT

The Centurion's new Radeon HD 2900XT graphics card runs DirectX 10 games well, but it's not as fast in other titles. With a slow processor and a 19in monitor, it's not as good value as other PCs here.

SUMMARY

- ✓ Fast in DirectX 10 games; big hard disk
- ✗ No speakers; 19in monitor
- ✗ Slow in applications

DESKTOP PC AMD Athlon 64 X2 5000+, 2GB RAM, 500GB hard disk, 512MB Sapphire Radeon HD 2900XT, DVD+/-RW +/-DL, 19in widescreen LCD
PART CODE Centurion CS2900XT PC Package
SUPPLIER Gladiator 08456 444666
DETAILS www.gladiatorcomputers.com



MESH Elite Prestige CSX

★★★★★

£799 inc VAT and delivery

With a stylish display and case, Mesh's Elite Prestige CSX will look good on any desktop.

FEATURES

The 22in monitor has a native resolution of 1,680x1,050 pixels. As well as being great for games, this gives you a massive Windows desktop to work on. This monitor delivers a bright, consistent white and has decent viewing angles. It provides slightly more contrast than the Cibox monitor supplied by CyberPower and RL Supplies PC, but detail isn't quite as sharp. Both displays are good, but unexceptional.

Like many manufacturers, Mesh has opted for a wireless keyboard and mouse. These are fine for daily use, but most gamers prefer wired sets. No speakers are included, so you'll have to buy some or use the tinny monitor speakers.

The motherboard supports SLI, so you could add a second Nvidia graphics card later to make 3D games run faster. If you do, though, you may need to upgrade the 550W power supply. The 500GB hard disk should provide more than enough storage.

PERFORMANCE

The Elite Prestige's Intel Core 2 Duo E6750 processor runs at 2.66GHz. It performed well in our application benchmarks, taking fourth place with an overall score of 207. PC Nextday's Zoostorm uses the same processor, but its Intel chipset outperformed the Nvidia one used here to gain a slightly higher score.

The PC is fitted with an Nvidia GeForce 8800 GTS graphics card, which managed to produce 47.6fps in our Call of Duty 2 benchmark. This is one of the lower scores in the group, but it's good enough to play games smoothly. Increasing the resolution to match that of the monitor produced a smooth frame rate of 38.7fps.

VERDICT

The Elite Prestige has a good 22in monitor, but it's slower than the CyberPower and RL Supplies PCs in 3D. Both are better for gaming.

SUMMARY

- ✓ Fast in applications
- ✓ SLI capable; big hard disk
- ✗ Wireless mouse and keyboard; no speakers

DESKTOP PC Intel Core 2 Duo E6750, 2GB RAM, 500GB hard disk, 256MB Leadtek Winfast PX8800 GT TDH, DVD+/-RW +/-DL, 22in widescreen LCD
PART CODE Elite Prestige CSX
SUPPLIER Mesh 0844 736 0440
DETAILS www.meshcomputers.com



PC NEXTDAY Zoostorm 5-5403 Edge PC

★★★★★

£800 inc VAT and delivery

The Zoostorm is quick in Windows but not powerful enough in 3D for a gaming PC.

FEATURES

PC Nextday's case has an elegantly curved front, with a door to cover the DVD writer and memory card reader. Inside is an SLI-capable motherboard, so you can add a second Nvidia graphics card in the future.

The 22in Asus monitor is not the brightest in the group, but its contrast is better than that of the 22in Cibox and Mirai displays. Sadly, like most of the monitors here, it struggled in our more demanding greyscale and colour tests.

The Zoostorm comes with a stylish set of Philips 5.1 surround-sound speakers. These produce decent audio for games, with plenty of volume and bass. The supplied mouse is a basic wired model, but the keyboard is curved. This makes the essential left Shift key annoyingly small. PC Nextday includes a one-year onsite warranty with this PC, so you won't have to pack it back in its box if something goes wrong.

PERFORMANCE

With 2GB of RAM and an Intel Core 2 Duo E6750 processor, the Zoostorm came a close third in our application benchmarks with an overall score of 214. It's easily powerful enough to run the most demanding applications.

Unfortunately it's not so impressive in 3D, as its Nvidia GeForce 8600 GTS card proved far slower than the 8800 GTS cards in many of the PCs here. It ran our Call of Duty 2 test at just 21.8fps, and matching the monitor's resolution of 1,680x1,050 pixels reduced it to a lowly 16.8fps. You'll have to reduce detail levels significantly to run modern games smoothly.

VERDICT

The Zoostorm is fast in applications and has a good monitor and decent speakers, but it's simply not powerful enough in 3D to make a good gaming PC.

SUMMARY

- ✓ Fast in applications
- ✓ SLI capable
- ✗ Slow in 3D

DESKTOP PC Intel Core 2 Duo E6750, 2GB RAM, 320GB hard disk, 256MB Inno3D GF 8600 GTS, DVD+/-RW +/-DL, 22in widescreen LCD
PART CODE Zoostorm 5-5403 Edge PC
SUPPLIER PC Nextday
DETAILS www.pcnextday.co.uk



RL SUPPLIES Modula 4400 OC

★★★★★

£800 inc VAT and delivery



With the Modula, RL Supplies has concentrated on the essential parts of a gaming PC: a big widescreen monitor and a fast graphics card.

FEATURES

The Modula's case is fairly bland except for a blue LED light that runs across the front. The motherboard supports SLI, but the two PCI Express x16 slots are very close together. Adding a second graphics card will seriously hamper the air flow to the first.

The 22in Cibox monitor is identical to the one supplied with CyberPower's PC. At first it looked a little washed out, but adjusting its settings produced a far better picture. Like most monitors here it performed poorly in our more demanding tests, making it unsuitable for colour-sensitive work such as photo editing.

The wired Microsoft keyboard and mouse are fine for gaming, and the Logitech X-230 speakers won our best audio product of the year award in 2006. They put many more expensive speaker sets to shame. We tested this PC running Windows XP Home, but it's also available with Vista Home Premium if you prefer, at no extra cost.

PERFORMANCE

The Modula was the fastest PC in the group in both our Prey and Call of Duty 2 benchmarks. Its Nvidia GeForce 8800 GTS graphics card runs at the same high speeds as the one fitted in the CyberPower PC, and has a whopping 640MB of memory. It performed well in our DirectX 10 tests, too.

The Modula's Intel Core 2 Duo E4400 processor runs at 2.5GHz, and it has 2GB of RAM. It scored 201 in our Shopper benchmarks, placing it in the middle of this group. It'll complete even demanding tasks quickly.

VERDICT

With a large monitor, great speakers, a fast graphics card and a sensible keyboard and mouse, the Modula is the best gaming PC here.

SUMMARY

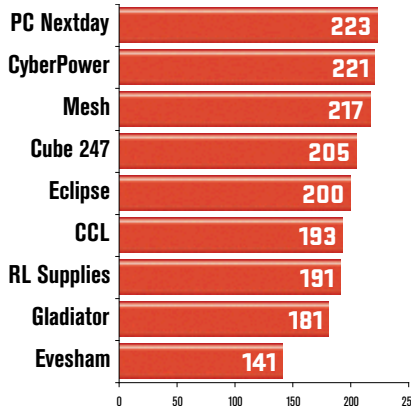
- ✓ Fast in 3D, including DirectX 10
- ✓ SLI motherboard
- ✗ Monitor could use more contrast

DESKTOP PC Intel Core 2 Duo E4400, 2GB RAM, 320GB hard disk, 640MB BFG Nvidia GeForce 8800 GTS, DVD+/-RW +/-DL, 22in widescreen LCD
PART CODE Modula 4400 OC
SUPPLIER RL Supplies 01923 896996
DETAILS www.rlsupplies.co.uk

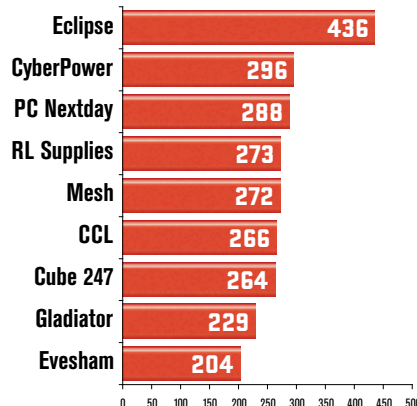
BENCHMARKS

2D Performance Shopper Application Tests

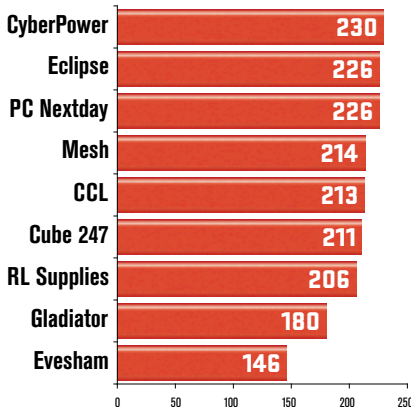
Image-Editing Test



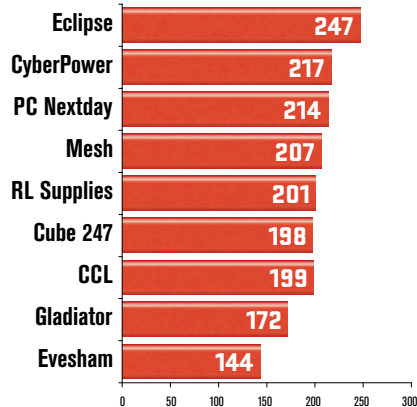
Video-Encoding Test



Multitasking



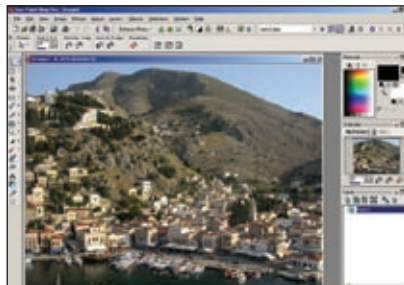
Overall



Computer Shopper's 2D benchmarks have been designed to show how PCs stand up to the toughest tasks Windows can throw at them. Today's PCs have no problem running office applications such as Word and Excel, so we have chosen to focus our tests on areas where you could experience difficulties.

Encoding a short video to MPEG2 format is a processor-intensive task that anyone transferring home videos to DVD will have to tackle. Our image-editing test simulates a session of photo enhancement using Paint Shop Pro X. In our third test, a set of audio files is ripped to MP3 format.

Finally, we have a multitasking test designed to test the benefits of HyperThreaded and dual-core processors. This test compresses a DVD at the same time as running our

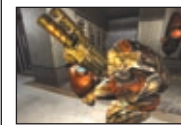
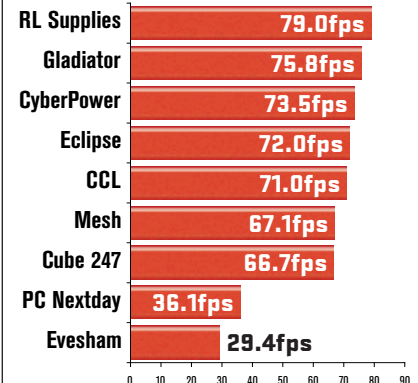


SETTINGS We run our application tests at 1,280x1,024 resolution and in 32-bit colour
WEB www.computershopper.co.uk

image-editing test. Figures are relative to a reference Evesham Athlon 64 3500+, which scores 100 in all tests.

3D Performance Games

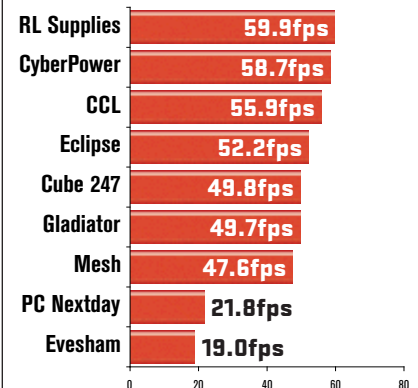
Prey (fps)



SETTINGS 1,280x1,024 resolution, high shader detail, 4x AA
WEB www.prey.com

Our Prey benchmark tests whether a PC has the power needed to play cutting-edge 3D games. A good score here indicates that a PC should cope with graphically intense 3D games.

Call of Duty 2 (fps)



SETTINGS 1,280x1,024 resolution, 32-bit colour, default settings
WEB www.futuremark.com

Call of Duty 2 uses DirectX and is one of the most demanding games available. With a wide range of effects and frenetic action, it tests every aspect of graphics performance.

Labs verdict £800 Gaming PCs

As many of this month's PCs have similar graphics cards installed, we thought that picking a winner would be difficult, but after extensive testing, three systems stood out from the rest.

If you need a PC that can charge through tough Windows applications as well as playing games, the Eclipse Matrix is worth considering. It's not the fastest PC here for 3D games, but it is the cheapest computer

we've ever seen that comes with a quad-core processor. It's amazingly fast for tasks such as video encoding.

CyberPower's Gamer Infinity is also a good buy. It's quick in Windows applications, comes with a big screen and performs well in 3D games. It has a three-year warranty, too.

The Gamer Infinity is just outperformed by the RL Supplies Modula, though. It too has a large 22in widescreen display, and it's



RL SUPPLIES
Modula
4400 OC



extremely fast in 3D games thanks to its powerful graphics card. With great speakers and a good keyboard and mouse, it's a great gaming PC and our Best Buy.

MANUFACTURER	CCL	CUBE 247	CYBERPOWER	ECLIPSE
Model name	DUO-6600-GMX	Electra ST9	Gamer Infinity GTS Family	Matrix Quad Sli i66n88s
Rating	★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
Processor	Intel Core 2 Duo E6600	Intel Core 2 Duo E6600	Intel Core 2 Duo E6600	Intel Core 2 Quad Q6600
Processor speed	2.4GHz	2.4GHz	2.7GHz	2.4GHz
Processor socket	LGA775	LGA775	LGA775	LGA775
Level I cache	128KB	128KB	128KB	256KB
Level II cache	4,096KB	4,096KB	4,096KB	2x 4,096KB
Memory installed	2GB	2GB	2GB	2GB
Memory type	PC2-4300	PC2-6400	PC2-6400	PC2-6400
Maximum memory	8GB	8GB	8GB	8GB
Motherboard	Foxconn P9657AA-8EKRS2H	Asus P5B-E	Asus P5N-E SLI	MSI P6N SLI V2
Motherboard chipset	Intel P965	Intel P965	Nvidia nForce 650i SLI	Nvidia nForce 650i SLI
Memory bus speed	266MHz	266MHz	300MHz	266MHz
BIOS	Phoenix	AMI	Phoenix	AMI
PORTS				
USB2 ports (front/rear)	3/4	2/10	2/4	2/4
FireWire ports (front/rear)	0/1	0/1	0/1	0/0
Networking	10/100/1,000	10/100/1,000	10/100/1,000	10/100/1,000
Legacy ports	2x PS/2, serial, parallel	2x PS/2, parallel	2x PS/2, parallel	2x PS/2, serial
Other ports	1x eSATA	1x eSATA	1x eSATA	None
INTERNAL EXPANSION				
Case	Midi tower	Midi tower	Midi tower	Midi tower
Case size HxWxD	423x182x476mm	426x175x480mm	442x214x522mm	460x199x481mm
PCI (free)	3 (2)	3 (0)	2 (2)	2 (2)
PCIe x1 (free)	2 (1)	2 (1)	1 (1)	1 (1)
PCIe x16 (free)	1 (0)	1 (0)	2 (1)	2 (1)
AGP (free)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Serial ATA (free)	6 (5)	6 (5)	4 (3)	4 (2)
Memory (free)	4 (2)	4 (2)	4 (2)	4 (2)
Drive bays 3½in (free)	7 (5)	6 (4)	3 (2)	5 (4)
Drive bays 5¼in (free)	4 (3)	4 (2)	6 (5)	5 (4)
HARD DISK				
Model	Samsung Spinpoint T166 (HD501LJ)	Seagate Barracuda (ST3500841AS)	Samsung Spinpoint T133 (HD401LJ)	Samsung Spinpoint T166 (HD501LJ)
Interface	SATA 300	SATA 300	SATA 300	SATA 300
Capacity	500GB (466GB)	500GB (466GB)	400GB (373GB)	500GB (466GB)
Spin speed	7,200rpm	7,200rpm	7,200rpm	7,200rpm
GRAPHICS				
Technology	PCI Express	PCI Express	PCI Express	PCI Express
Graphics card	320MB XFX GeForce 8800 GTS (PV-T80G-GHF4)	320MB Asus EN8800GTS/HTDP/320M	320MB EVGA e-GeForce 8800 GTS (320-P2-811)	320MB XFX GeForce 8800 GTS Extreme (PV-T80G-GHE9)
Graphics chipset	Nvidia GeForce 8800GTS	Nvidia GeForce 8800GTS	Nvidia GeForce 8800GTS	Nvidia GeForce 8800GTS
Graphics/video ports	2x DVI, S-video, component, composite	2x DVI, S-video, component, composite	2x DVI, S-video, component, composite	2x DVI, S-video, component, composite
SOUND				
Sound card	RealTek HD	SoundMax HD	RealTek HD	RealTek HD
Sound card outputs	7.1 line out, optical S/PDIF	7.1 line out, coaxial/optical S/PDIF out	5.1 line out, coaxial S/PDIF out	7.1 line out
Speakers	None	Creative Inspire T6100 5.1	Logitech S200 2.1	Logitech S500 5.1
REMOVABLE DRIVES				
Floppy drive 3½in	No	Yes	No	No
Memory card reader	CompactFlash, Secure Digital, MultiMedia Card, Memory Stick, Smart Media, MicroDrive	None	None	None
Optical drive	LiteOn DH-201A1P (20X DVD+R, 20X DVD-R, 8X DVD+RW, 6X DVD-RW, 8X DVD+R DL, 8X DVD-R DL, 12X DVD-RAM, 48X CD-R, 32X CD-RW, 16X DVD, 48X CD-ROM)	NEC AD-7170A (18X DVD+R, 18X DVD-R, 8X DVD+RW, 6X DVD-RW, 8X DVD+R DL, 8X DVD-R DL, 12X DVD-RAM, 48X CD-R, 32X CD-RW, 18X DVD-ROM, 48X CD-ROM), LiteOn LH-16D1P (16X DVD-ROM, 48X CD-ROM)	NEC AD-7170A (18X DVD+R, 18X DVD-R, 8X DVD+RW, 6X DVD-RW, 8X DVD+R DL, 8X DVD-R DL, 12X DVD-RAM, 48X CD-R, 32X CD-RW, 18X DVD-ROM, 48X CD-ROM)	NEC ND-5170A (18X DVD+R, 18X DVD-R, 8X DVD+RW, 6X DVD-RW, 8X DVD+R DL, 8X DVD-R DL, 48X CD-R, 32X CD-RW, 16X DVD, 48X CD-ROM)
DISPLAY				
Size and technology	19in widescreen LCD	19in widescreen LCD	22in widescreen LCD	19in widescreen LCD
Model	Asus VW192S	GNR TS902W	Cibox C2201	Asus VW192S
Native resolution	1,440x900	1,440x900	1,680x1,050	1,440x900
Response time	5ms	5ms	5ms	5ms
Inputs	D-sub, line in	DVI, D-sub, line in	D-sub	D-sub, line in
OTHER HARDWARE				
Modem	No	No	No	No
Keyboard	Saitek Eclipse	Microsoft Wireless Keyboard 3000 v1.0	Logitech Deluxe Keyboard	Microsoft Wireless Keyboard 3000 v1.0
Mouse	Logitech G5 Laser Mouse	Microsoft Wireless Optical Mouse 2.0A	Logitech Optical Mouse	Microsoft Wireless Optical Mouse 2.0A
Keyboard/mouse rating	★★★★★	★★★	★★★	★★★
Extras	None	PCI digital TV tuner	None	None
SOFTWARE				
Software	None	None	Corel Snapfire 11 SE	None
Operating system	Windows XP Media Center Edition 2005	Windows Vista Home Premium	Windows Vista Home Premium	Windows Vista Home Premium
Operating system restore option	Windows disc	Windows disc	Restore disc	Windows disc
BUYING INFORMATION				
Parts and labour warranty	One year onsite	One year RTB	Three years RTB	One year RTB
Tech support times	9am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm Sat	9am-6pm Mon-Fri	9am-5.30pm Mon-Fri	9.30am-5.30pm Mon-Fri
Company founded	1995	1999	2005	1993
Tech support staff	8	8	3	7
Employees	70	30	14	30
Price including delivery (inc VAT)	£799	£800	£799	£800
Price including delivery (ex VAT)	£681	£681	£681	£681
Supplier	CCL 01274 471201	Cube247 0870 2421179	CyberPower Systems 0800 6120279	Eclipse 08707 456000
Details	www.cclonline.com	www.cube247.co.uk	www.cyberpowersystem.co.uk	www.eclipse-computers.com



EVESHAM	GLADIATOR	MESH	PC NEXTDAY	RL SUPPLIES
Solar MXGT	Centurion CS2900XT PC Package	Elite Prestige CSX	Zoostorm 5-5403 Edge PC	Modula 4400 OC
★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★★★
Intel Core 2 Duo E6300	AMD Athlon 64 X2 5000+	Intel Core 2 Duo E6750	Intel Core 2 Duo E6750	Intel Core 2 Duo E4400
1.86GHz	2.6GHz	2.66GHz	2.66GHz	2.5GHz
LGA775	Socket AM2	LGA775	LGA775	LGA775
128KB	256KB	128KB	128KB	128KB
4,096KB	2x 512KB	4,096KB	4,096KB	4,096KB
1GB	2GB	2GB	2GB	2GB
PC2-5300	PC2-6400	PC2-5300	PC2-5300	PC2-5300
8GB	4GB	8GB	8GB	16GB
MSI P965 Neo2	MSI K9N Neo	Asus P5N-E SLI	Foxconn P35A	ECS nForce 570 SLIT-A (V3.1)
Intel P965	Nvidia nForce 550	Nvidia nForce 650i SLI	Intel P35 + ICH9	Nvidia nForce 570 SLI
266MHz	200MHz	333MHz	333MHz	250MHz
AMI	AMI	Phoenix	AMI	Phoenix
2/4	2/4	3/4	3/6	2/4
1/1	0/0	0/1	0/0	0/0
10/100/1,000	10/100/1,000	10/100/1,000	10/100/1,000	10/100/1,000
2x PS/2, serial, parallel	2x PS/2, serial, parallel	2x PS/2, parallel	2x PS/2, serial, parallel	2x PS/2, serial, parallel
None	None	1x eSATA	2x eSATA	None
Midi tower	Midi tower	Midi tower	Midi tower	Midi tower
430x195x494mm	466x205x456mm	470x202x458mm	437x196x500mm	417x177x451mm
2 (2)	3 (3)	2 (2)	3 (3)	3 (3)
2 (1)	2 (1)	1 (1)	1 (1)	1 (0)
1 (0)	1 (0)	2 (1)	2 (1)	2 (1)
0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
5 (3)	4 (3)	4 (3)	4 (2)	4 (3)
4 (2)	4 (2)	4 (2)	4 (2)	4 (2)
5 (4)	6 (5)	4 (2)	5 (3)	6 (4)
4 (3)	4 (3)	3 (2)	5 (4)	4 (3)
Western Digital Caviar SE (WD2500JS)	Hitachi Deskstar T7K500 (HDT725050VLA)	Seagate Barracuda (ST3500630AS)	Western Digital Caviar SE (WD3200AAJS)	Hitachi Deskstar T7K500 (HDT725032VLA)
SATA 300	SATA 300	SATA 300	SATA 300	SATA 300
320GB (288GB)	500GB (466GB)	500GB (466GB)	320GB (298GB)	320GB (298GB)
7,200rpm	7,200rpm	7,200rpm	7,200rpm	7,200rpm
PCI Express	PCI Express	PCI Express	PCI Express	PCI Express
256MB Leadtek Winfast PX8600 GT TDH	512MB Sapphire Radeon HD 2900XT	256MB Leadtek Winfast PX8800 GT TDH	256MB Inno3D GF 8600 GTS	640MB BFG Nvidia GeForce 8800 GTS
Nvidia GeForce 8600GT	ATI Radeon HD2900XT	Nvidia GeForce 8800GTS	Nvidia GeForce 8600GTS	Nvidia GeForce 8800GTS
2x DVI, S-video, component, composite	2x DVI, S-video in/out, component, composite in/out	2x DVI, S-video, component, composite	2x DVI, S-video, component, composite	2x DVI, S-video, component, composite
RealTek HD	RealTek HD	RealTek HD	RealTek HD	RealTek HD
7.1 line out	7.1 line out	5.1 line out, coaxial S/PDIF out	7.1 line out, coaxial S/PDIF out	7.1 line out, coaxial/optical S/PDIF out
Creative i-Trigue 3220 2.1	None	None	Philips LMS460 5.1	Logitech X-230 2.1
No	No	No	No	No
None	None	CompactFlash, Secure Digital, MultiMedia Card, Memory Stick, Smart Media, MicroDrive	CompactFlash, Secure Digital, MultiMedia Card, Memory Stick, Smart Media, MicroDrive, xD	CompactFlash, Secure Digital, MultiMedia Card, Memory Stick, Smart Media, MicroDrive
TSST SH-S183A (18X DVD+R, 18X DVD-R, 8X DVD+RW, 6X DVD-RW, 8X DVD+R DL, 8X DVD-R DL, 12X DVD-RAM, 48X CD-R, 32X CD-RW, 16X DVD-ROM, 48X CD-ROM)	TSST SH-S182D (18X DVD+R, 18X DVD-R, 8X DVD+RW, 6X DVD-RW, 8X DVD+R DL, 8X DVD-R DL, 12X DVD-RAM, 48X CD-R, 32X CD-RW, 16X DVD-ROM, 48X CD-ROM)	Sony DW-G121A (16X DVD+R, 16X DVD-R, 8X DVD+RW, 6X DVD-RW, 8X DVD+R DL, 4X DVD-R DL, 5X DVD-RAM, 48X CD-R, 24X CD-RW, 16X DVD, 48X CD-ROM)	TSST SH-S182D (18X DVD+R, 18X DVD-R, 8X DVD+RW, 6X DVD-RW, 8X DVD+R DL, 8X DVD-R DL, 12X DVD-RAM, 48X CD-R, 32X CD-RW, 16X DVD-ROM, 48X CD-ROM)	TSST SH-S182D (18X DVD+R, 18X DVD-R, 8X DVD+RW, 6X DVD-RW, 8X DVD+R DL, 8X DVD-R DL, 8X DVD-R DL, 12X DVD-RAM, 48X CD-R, 32X CD-RW, 16X DVD-ROM, 48X CD-ROM)
20in widescreen LCD	19in widescreen LCD	22in widescreen LCD	22in widescreen LCD	22in widescreen LCD
Viewsonic VG2030wm	Asus VW192S	Mirai DML-522W100	Asus MW221u	Cibox C2201
1,680x1,050	1,440x900	1,680x1,050	1,680x1,050	1,680x1,050
5ms	5ms	5ms	2ms	5ms
DVI, D-sub, line in	D-sub, line in	DVI, D-sub, line in	DVI, D-sub, line in	D-sub, line in
No	No	No	No	No
Logitech Deluxe 650 Cordless	Logitech Internet 350 Keyboard	Logitech Deluxe 650 Cordless	Microsoft Comfort Curve Keyboard 2000 v1.0	Microsoft Digital Media Keyboard 1.0A
Logitech Cordless Optical Mouse	Logitech RX1000 Mouse	Logitech Cordless Optical Mouse	Microsoft Wheel Mouse Optical 1.1A	Microsoft Wheel Mouse Optical 1.1A
★★★	★★★	★★★	★★★	★★★
None	None	None	None	None
Roxio Media Creator 9, BullGuard Security Suite 7, Microsoft Works 8.5	Ahead Nero Express 6	Microsoft Works 8.5, CyberLink PowerDVD 5, Power2Go 4, PowerProducer 3, PowerDirector 3, PowerBackup 1, Medi@Show SE, PowerCinema 4	Ahead Nero Express 7	Ahead Nero Express 7
Windows Vista Home Premium	Windows Vista Home Premium	Windows Vista Home Premium	Windows Vista Home Premium	Windows XP Home Edition
Restore partition, restore disc	Windows disc	Windows disc and restore partition	Restore partition	Windows disc
Two years onsite, third year RTB	One year onsite, second year RTB	One year onsite	One year onsite	Two years RTB
9am-5.30pm Mon-Sat	9am-5.30pm Mon-Fri	8am-8pm Mon-Fri, 9am-4pm Sat	9am-6pm Mon-Fri	10am-4pm Mon-Fri
1983	1999	1987	1993	1996
82	6	45	25	4
314	15	275	75	17
£800	£799	£799	£800	£800
£681	£681	£681	£681	£681
Evesham 08701 609500	Gladiator 08456 444666	Mesh 0844 736 0440	PC Nextday	RL Supplies 01923 896996
www.evesham.com	www.gladiatorcomputers.com	www.meshcomputers.com	www.pcnextday.co.uk	www.rlsupplies.co.uk